

ARTICLE APPEARED  
ON PAGE 4-A

WASHINGTON TIMES

12 February 1986

# Ban on supercomputer use seen as curb on Soviet arms

By Ed Rogers  
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

A government move to deny communist bloc scientists access to new supercomputers at U.S. universities will prevent the Soviets from bridging one of their biggest military shortcomings, a Pentagon official said yesterday.

Universities have agreed in principle to comply with an administration ban on allowing researchers from Warsaw Pact nations to use the tax-financed supercomputers, Deputy Assistant Defense Secretary Stephen D. Bryen said.

"I think the lack of supercomputing is a major problem for the Soviets," Mr. Bryen said. "It's one of the key reasons why they are not moving ahead in areas like SDI [Strategic Defense Initiative]."

"No matter how much money they throw at the problem, like making lasers to shoot down satellites and things of that sort, you can't really do it effectively without supercomputing capability," Mr. Bryen said.

The policy also prevents Soviet scientists from using the supercomputers for non-military purposes, but Mr. Bryen pointed out that "Soviet scientists get co-opted by the KGB" Soviet intelligence service.

The Defense, Commerce and State departments have been negotiating with universities through the National Science Foundation, but no operating mechanism has yet been agreed on, he said.

"There has been an agreement in principle," he said. "Everyone agrees it should be controlled. In the last few weeks the closure on principle has been made. The debate is now over signing out some kind of exceptions policy."

American scientists were reluctant to go along with the administration ban because they disliked the role of policing the use of supercomputers and believed the strictures would interfere with academic freedom, Mr. Bryen said.

"I don't disagree with the American university professors," he said. "They should not be asked to block any Soviet individual from access to a supercomputer," he said. "They are

not policemen. They are academics, and we shouldn't expect that.

However, Mr. Bryen pointed out that the United States should comply with strictures on exporting supercomputer technology agreed to by the 15-nation Coordinating Committee for Multilateral Export Controls (COCOM).

"The real issue here is not a question of academic freedom," he said. "The real issue is whether we can, as a government, set up rules consistent with our COCOM obligations that make sense."

The export-control agreement was in response to Soviet efforts to get the benefit of Western technology from public and government sources by every possible means, including espionage.

"They have been very successful in the sense of having access to great amount of information published by both government and industry," Mr. Bryen said.

"They have been a lot less successful in having hands-on access to American companies in the United States," he added. "American companies are smarter than that and tend to be careful."

"They have instead tried to get hold of blueprints and documents, particularly working against U.S. subsidiaries and contractors abroad, especially in Western Europe. So they have a pretty big operation going to do this sort of thing."

A joint study by the Defense Department and the CIA released last September showed in detail how the Soviets had used American technology in a wide range of military developments.

The study called the Soviet efforts to obtain technology, legally or illegally, "a massive, well-organized campaign."

A staff assistant to Mr. Bryen who asked not to be named pointed out that access to a supercomputer might enable the Soviets to break sophisticated military codes, improve their own codes, and even learn how to build their own supercomputer.

The supercomputers, which cost up to \$20 million each, are capable of performing up to 50 million precision operations a second.